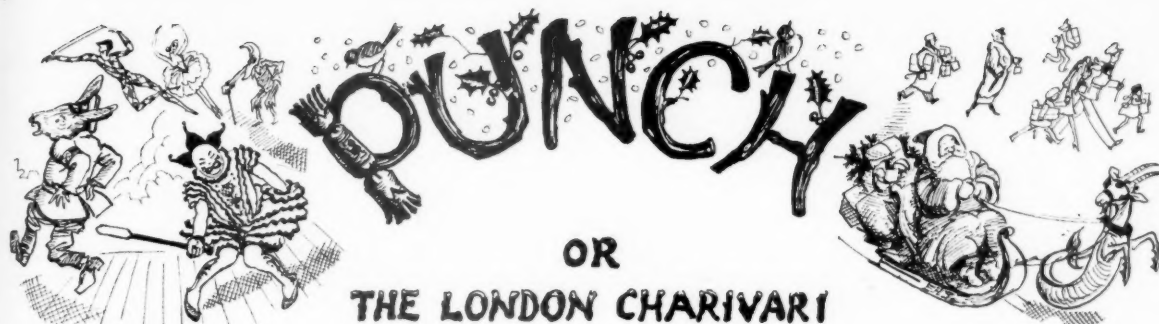


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Vol. CXC VII No. 5149

December 6 1939

Charivaria

FROM the Isle of Wight comes the report that The Needles are gradually moving further out to sea. Those new magnetic mines must be more powerful than we thought at first.

A fox has been seen in the centre of a large Sussex town. It is thought to have been a reconnaissance fox trying to find out what is delaying the hunting season.

"What is wanted," says a music publisher, "is a war song that is in keeping with the mechanised army of to-day." What's wrong with "Clank, Clank, Clank, the Boys are Marching"?

It is suggested that gas and electricity companies should amalgamate for the duration. At least trench warfare might be abandoned while the black-out lasts.



Members of the Gestapo are reported still to be arresting each other in connection with the Munich bomb outrage. It is thought that by a process of exhaustion Herr HIMMLER will ultimately have to give himself up.

Mad and Nomad
"It is said that Hitler has some crazy idea of re-establishing the wholly roaming Empire."—Schoolboy's Essay.

A well-known bass singer was once a milkman. It must have been a turning-point in his career when his yodel broke so decisively.



"OPIUM FUMES IN HOUSE
SEQUEL TO POLICE VISIT"

H'm. Headings in "Liverpool Echo."

"Dr. GOEBBELS claims that fifty-two British aircraft have been shot down by German planes, all of them over British territory," says *The News Chronicle*. That fellow seems to be pretty careless with other people's aeroplanes.

The FUEHRER recently awarded medals to many prominent Nazis connected with the building of the Siegfried Line. Owing to pressure of space we don't give their names and that is also the reason why Field-Marshal GOERING didn't get one.

Many pantomimes are to be produced this season. Including, we hope, *Ali Baba and the Forty Profiteers*.





POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS—PROGRESS

Mule Transport

THIS here motorisation of the army (said Mr. Harrison) is all very well in its way, and I don't deny but what it's an inspiring sight to see the lads go sweeping past in their armoured cars and lorries and what-not. But I'm bound to say it brings back melancholy memories to me of the last war, when we had all them dear little mules.

Now, I've always been a great admirer of animals and, that being so, I had a deal to do with our mules. I was serving in a big camp in the South of England during the last couple of years, and there was almost as many mules there as men. But there was only one mule for me, and that was Lucy, the goldst-heartest mule I ever come across.

Funnily enough, though, Lucy warn't

by any means what you'd call a universal favourite. She had a temperament that was easily mistaken for just temper, and I've heard men that started in to drive her a couple of miles and just had to sit still without moving an inch and watch the mule-cart being slowly kicked to splinters about their heads—I've heard 'em express opinions of Lucy that was practically uncharitable. She was just full of playful little ways. When it come to biting, there warn't a bulldog in Britain had a better idea of the direction the seat of the trousers lay in, and I do believe she could have kicked a fly off a man's nose, if so be you could have found a man ready and willing to make the experiment.

But there was just one drawback to Lucy's character, and that was she

didn't like work. Mind you, Sir, that was a common complaint in the camp, but it was a complaint that Lucy had worse than most. It was soon seen that I was the only one Lucy 'ud do a thing for, so of course it fell to me to work her pretty well all the time. Mostly I had to drive her over to the station, three or four miles away, to fetch supplies. That was all right. She'd make the station like a bird. But when I'd got the supplies on board—that was when the trouble 'ud start. She'd get a look in her eye like she was figuring out that it warn't so bad to be away from camp for a spell.

"Bless me!" you could 'most see her thinking, "here's this lovely fresh morning, with the birds a-singing their little hearts out and all, and they want me to report back at camp right away.

Why should I? Darn my ears, I won't! Little Lucy stays right here!"

And she done it too.

Me and my mate we'd coax her and whack her and cuss her and bribe her with bits of chocolate out of the machines, but nothing shifted Lucy when she'd a mind to bide where she was. When we was tuckered out we'd nip into the Railway Hotel for to get refreshed and revived, and then we'd come out and take another whack at her. Maybe she'd see a bit of sense in an hour or so. Maybe she'd be feeling obstinate and wouldn't until it got dark and she wanted to go to bed. We could usually rely on her to fool around outside the station most of the day.

Naturally the chaps began to get a higher opinion of her when this got known, and there used to be some competition to be my mate on my trips to the station. One day a young fellow, Green by name, comes to me and he says, says he:

"Look here, Harrison, you're going to the station to-morrow morning, aren't you?"

"I am," I says. "To-day and to-morrow and the day after and every blessed day till peace is declared."

"Well," says he, "I've wangled things to come with you. The fact is I want to go to Bladford, twenty miles down the line."

"And you want the melancholy satisfaction of watching the train go out?" I says.

"By no means," he says. "I thought—well, you know Lucy's little tricks. Supposing she got stuck as usual outside the station? I've got it all worked out. There's a train leaves for Bladford at ten-fifteen, and there's one home again that gets in at three-forty-two. Do you reckon Lucy would keep up her system of passive resistance long enough for me to make the trip?"

Well, Sir, I knew that what he was suggesting was irregular and unconstitutional in the highest degree, and I warn't enthusiastic.

"You see," he goes on, "my wife is going to be in Bladford to-morrow, and I can't get leave. And—well, if I have lunch in Bladford to-morrow it's a quid in your pocket."

That clinched it, Sir. I mean of course, him wanting to see his wife. So we fixed it up, and ten minutes after I started off for the station as usual.

And that was where I struck a snag. There was a very keen young N.C.O., Sergeant Henderson, and he allowed he'd come with me this time to see if the rumours about Lucy was true. Now, Lucy had the most astonishing

dislike of N.C.O.s, and the minute she felt her truck being loaded at the station she stuck out all four legs pretty well at right angles to her body, and put back her ears, and showed the whites of her eyes, and I judged she allowed she'd stay where she was for a spell.

Me and the sergeant we done our best. The amount of energy we put into trying to shift Lucy would have done for us to tote her load back to camp on our own shoulders. We bust the whip in the first ten minutes alone. Then the sergeant grabbed hold of the bit and hauled and hauled and nigh hauled Lucy's head off; so really it was only tit-for-tat when Lucy nigh bit his hand off. Then we borrowed a horse and hitched him alongside of Lucy, and her and that horse had a tug-of-war that was downright thrilling to watch. But the horse come off second best, and us and the horse we all sat down for a spell to get our strength back, and then the sergeant said there warn't no other course open—we'd have to light a fire under Lucy.

That worked all right. The moment Lucy felt the flames she went off like a rocket. It was grand for me—I was in the cart. But Sergeant Henderson had a longish dusty walk of it back to camp, and when he arrived he warn't in too sweet a temper nor just overflowing with affection for Lucy. And the long and the short of it was when I reported the next morning with young Green I found they'd took Lucy away from me and give me another mule.

"Sergeant's orders," they told me. "He says Lucy ain't to go out of camp again."

Me and Green we looked at one another. I couldn't bear to think of the boy's disappointment, for I knew he'd wrote to his wife to expect him, and he was all joyful and excited at the prospect of seeing her again. I argued a bit—said old Lucy was the only mule I really understood. It warn't a bit of good. They wouldn't let me have her.

"All right," I says. "But I warn you—this mule's a stranger to me, and I ain't going to be held responsible for anything she takes it into her head to do."

"She'll be all right," they says. "Quietest mule in the company. She won't give you no trouble."

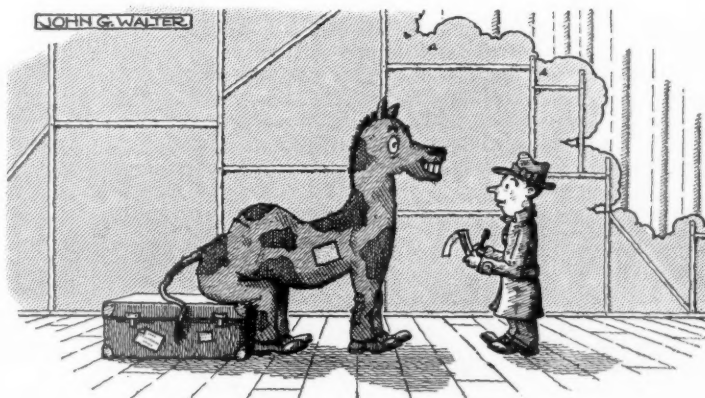
And off we started.

"Maybe she'll have the same trick," says Green, trying to be hopeful.

But there warn't a chance of that. That darned mule was the peacefulest, best-behaved animal you could imagine. She trotted along, good and calm, like it was a pleasure to be in the Army.

Until—I don't know. Maybe I got to thinking of Green's disappointment and my own quid. Maybe that give me a bit more strength in my arm than I allowed for. Anyhow, just as we got to the station I give her a cut across the loins, and it must have been a stinger. She took to her heels and bolted.

And if you'll believe me, Sir, she never stopped bolting until she fetched up in Bladford just before that train was due in. And was she done for? I had to rest her up all day, and it wasn't far off midnight before Green and me got back to camp. A most singular occurrence that, and I gathered the next morning that the captain took the same view.



"AND OF COURSE THE EXPERIENCE GAINED DURING OUR THREE YEARS WITH THE HUSSARS WAS LATER TO PROVE INVALUABLE."

Heil Cæsar!

I FOUND the Leader looking none too well after his long campaigns on the Western and Eastern Fronts and in North Africa. But it may have been his subsequent legal researches and the difficult task of reforming the calendar that made him seem so diffident, so clerk-like, so pale; at any rate he was wearing spectacles. . . .

I am speaking now of W. Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*, produced by Henry Cass and played last week at the Embassy Theatre in modern dress. It was a plucky and interesting presentation.

As always happens when I see or read this play, I was utterly bewildered by the dramatist's refusal to come out into the open either as a totalitarian or as a democrat; for however strongly you insist that it is a single—or double—slab of history taken from two of Plutarch's Lives and embodying (as by a happy miracle) the spiritual tragedy of Brutus, I still maintain that the audience is decoyed into asking constantly: "Were the Nazis in the right, or were the Republicans?" and that to this inevitable question there is no proper reply. You do not know whether a well-meaning tyrant has been foully murdered or a last attempt to save the Constitution has failed, and if you say "both" you are more of a philosopher than a playgoer, and who writes crook plays for philosophers?

THE only sincere member of the murder-gang was Brutus. But Brutus had the least personal right to murder Cæsar, and even Cæsar's ghost was obviously annoyed about the affair. Cassius was the arch-villain, but he doesn't come out too badly in the end when his quarrel with Brutus has been composed. Antony, who moves not only the Roman crowd but the modern audience to tears for his master's death, was in some ways a worse crook than Cassius. Cæsar—himself an ex-gangster—was surely (in Shakespeare's eyes) no superman nor yet an anointed king. Irritable, bombastic, vain: superstitious about the almanac which he had subdued (like all Gaul): the victim of epilepsy: a ripe subject for a Roman purge. And then those battle scenes! Antony and Octavius only triumphed because Brutus would not kill Antony and would not listen to the military advice of his more experienced friend. Antony, who gives Brutus so perfect a testimonial at the close, calmly discusses with Octavius which of their own friends is to be bumped off when the victory is won.

In fact you might well say "What a set!"

None of this would matter of course if you didn't feel that a contemporary audience, almost as familiar with the ethics of political assassination as an audience of 1939, had a right to demand some simpler propaganda and that Shakespeare (history or no history) was just the man to give it them. "The gods were on the victorious side, but Cato on the vanquished," said Lucan; but Lucan was an anti-Nazi. He disliked the politics of the gods. And so it goes round and round.

But how does *Julius Cæsar* "shape" in modern tailoring? That was what I went to see. The most important characters wore uniforms, ranging from something like the Brown-shirts', through Fascism to honest British khaki, but Casca was a bit of a sissy and wore a lounge toga and braccæ of ordinary West-End make. Antony selected white flannels for the Lupercal but changed from this mufti into a somehow faintly nautical blue for platform oratory and the battle-field. I was exercised in mind about the seniority of serving officers in the Republican military formations. "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars . . ." and I believe that

Cassius had three of them on his shoulder-strap. He might well, I think, have been promoted to temporary field-rank on taking over the Eastern Command. Eventually he shot himself with a small pistol well below the Sam Browne, but Brutus, more loyal to tradition, threw himself upon or worked himself round about his sword. His battle-dress was not unlike Antony's, but his great-coat grey.

There were shrapnel helmets and bayonets on the field of Philippi, and a good many more salutes than would have been encouraged during a severe action in the far-off days of 1914-1918. I think that both sides must have been short of machine-guns and artillery. The extreme simplicity that marks so much of the language suited modernisation rather well, and the architecture of the Imperial city was symbolically rather than realistically conveyed.

By an extraordinarily ingenious device (for which of course there is ample precedent) a flight of wooden steps was rotated in the gloom so as to seem now a rostrum and now a dug-out and now (if I understood it rightly) the slopes of a mountain-side. On the top of the dug-out containing Brutus and Cassius and members of their staff, Octavius and Antony were able to converse with each other unobserved by the enemy, and also (by cutting into the field-telephone) with their opponents' G.H.Q. Lucius played an accordion.

The Roman crowd suggested a Hyde Park audience, but redirected their loyalty faithfully and well; and for sheer audacity of conception I have to give my thanks to the producer for a simple gesture by Mark Antony, who, bending over the bleeding piece of earth, carefully removed great Cæsar's spectacles and put them in an upper pocket of his tunic.

I hope they were given to Calpurnia to balance on the dead dictator's bust; and now and then I wonder whether any of Shakespeare's plays, and if so, which of them, will ever be played by a Nudist Colony. EVOE.

The Whistling Wife

THERE was a wife went whistling by,
Nobody ever wondered why;
She might have had a daughter or son,
But nobody asked her, never a one.

She might have had a tale to tell,
She might have had a cow to sell,
She might have had no money at all
Or a handful of silver under her shawl;

She might have proved a dainty queen,
A darling wife she might have been;
She might have flown without a word—
The changeling of a whistling bird;

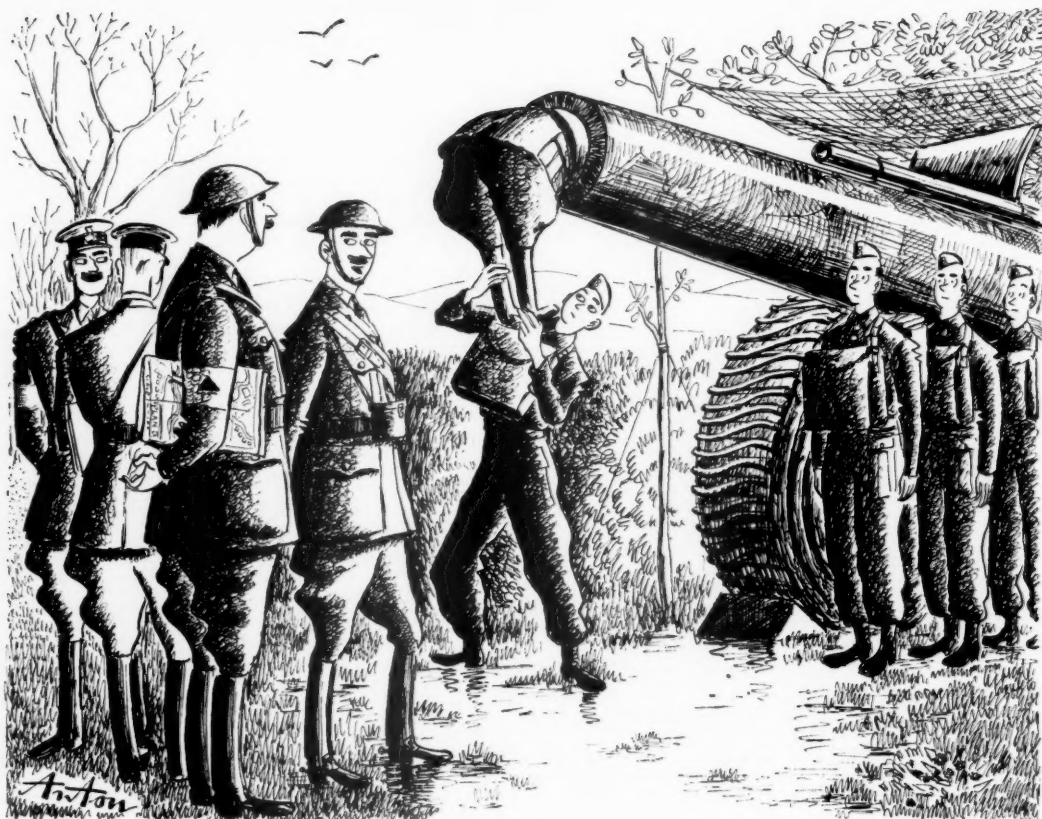
She might have chid, she might have smiled,
She might have rambled sweet and wild,
She might have gone like a running spring,
But nobody asked her anything.

She came her road, she went her way,
Nobody spoke her yea or nay;
Her shadow fell on road and wall:
She went by whistling, that was all.



THE CITIZEN'S DUTY CONTEST

"Here you are, girls. I'm going to toss it up, and you can scramble for it."



"The new General is far more thorough in his inspections than the last one was."

On the Water-Front

The Pier at Putney

"TALKING of the pier at Putney—" began my poor friend Poker, M.P.

"I did not know there was a pier at Putney," said I.

"There is no pier at Putney," said Poker. "I do not think there will ever be a pier at Putney. There used to be two piers at Putney. In 1920 there were two. In 1920, when we were at peace, there were nineteen piers between Hammersmith and Tower Bridge—a distance of ten miles. To-day, when we are at war, there are only four. However, don't let us bother about the proper equipment of the Thames—nobody else does. I mentioned the pier at Putney because all this talk about Question-time reminded me of it.

"Some people think that the daily

hour devoted to Questions to Ministers in the Commons is the lynch-pin, sheet-anchor, bed-rock, and cornerstone of the Constitution, and should be bigger. Others think it is a nuisance and should be abolished.

"Both, I think, are wrong. It is somewhat over-rated as an entertainment and an hour of it is quite enough. But it is valuable, and I should hate to see it destroyed. Some of the knowing critics, as usual, are wildly off the point. Questions are not, as they seem to think, mere evidence of idle curiosity: they are, in most cases, an 'instrument of policy.' Nor are all those 'purely local' questions mere senseless badgering of over-worked Ministers. Often they are designed to assist a Ministry in a battle with some stubborn local authority. Take the pier at Putney.

"I seldom put down questions," said Poker, "but I have put down one or two about the pier at Putney and the other invisible piers along the river. I began my war campaign about piers far back on March 15th. Here you are:

"To ask the Minister of Transport whether he is aware of the deficiency in piers and landing-stages in the Port of London; that there is one pier only between Lambeth and Kew, a distance of more than eleven miles; none between Westminster and the Tower; and none between Woolwich and Gravesend, a distance of seventeen miles; whether he is aware that by this deficiency the emergency transport services of the Port are likely to be much hampered, especially at low states of the tide; and will he call the various authorities concerned into consultation about it."

"The answer was short and sharp.

"Mr. Burgin: No, Sir. I am not aware that there is any deficiency of piers and

landing-stages in the Port of London, or that the emergency transport services of the Port are likely to be hampered by the lack of further piers and landing-stages.

"But a fortnight later, on March 29th, we returned to the charge, and carried an outpost:

"To ask the Minister of Transport whether he is satisfied that the existing number of piers, landing-stages and appropriate vessels is sufficient for the various emergency services which will be required in the Port of London in time of war.

Mr. Burgin: Yes, Sir, so far as probable requirements can be estimated at present, but the matter is under constant review as plans develop."

"The matter is under constant review." You perceive at once the extent of our advance, and the value of questions.

"When the first question popped up the Ministry no doubt (we must not blame the Ministry) rang up the Port of London Authority, and perhaps the London County Council and the London Passenger Transport Board (who all have power to build piers), and said: 'Piers! What about it?' And they, we may be permitted to imagine, replied: 'Piers? What, that chap Poker again? Piers! Not on your life! Oh, well, piers, if you like; but not if we have to pay for them.'

"But after the second (we suppose) they said: 'Piers? What that chap Poker again? Oh, well, say we're thinking about it.'

"Well, the summer slipped by. On the river, as you know, we did frequent 'exercises' and manœuvres. We hauled imaginary casualties out of the water and transferred them to imaginary ambulance boats, who cared for them and landed them at imaginary points on the bank, from which they were 'evacuated' by imaginary land-ambulances. One day, I remember, I opened my 'sealed orders' and took on board five imaginary stretcher-cases. There was no ambulance-boat in sight, not even a notional one. Our 'first-aid' is enthusiastic but rudimentary. To 'evacuate' my stretcher-cases at the nearest pier I should have had to steam four miles into London against the tide. To land them anywhere else (the tide being low) I should have had to beach my ship, carry them through twenty or thirty yards of Thames mud, and up the perpendicular side of a wharf or embankment about twenty feet high. I asked some high people afterwards what was my proper course of conduct. They were vagueish.

"However, the ambulance boats are no longer imaginary. They are about and busy, manned with keen young women and doctors and sea-rangers and all. But the 'further piers' are still imaginary.

"High people said to me privately. 'Oh, well, old boy, we shall use private wharves—embankments, and so on.'

"'You can't,' I said, 'except just before and just after high water—say two hours out of every twelve. And anyhow, that's a slovenly unsatisfactory suggestion. You want some place with a telephone, an office, and other conveniences.'

"They said, 'Oh, well, we could always rig up temporary pontoon landing-stages—with lighters and that sort of thing.'

"So they could. But they haven't.

"However, as I said, don't let's bother about those trifles. No doubt I am wrong. I only wanted to sketch the course of a 'question campaign.'

"Just as Mr. Burgin looked like becoming interested in piers and things he was shifted to the Ministry of Supply. That, I find, is always the way. No sooner is a Minister beginning to get the hang of cover-point than he is made wicket-keeper or put on to bowl. One has to begin all over again.

"Well, I gave his successor, Captain Euan Wallace, reasonable time to master railways and the roads before I bothered him with piers and things. Then, in June, I think, I put down another question. But I heard privately, from one of the high people who wanted piers too, that things were really moving in the pier-world, and it would be better if I took my question off the Paper. Which, with great satisfaction, I did.

"The war began. After a month of it the pier-situation was unchanged. Every day things happened on the river which tempted us to say, 'I told you so.' And at last (on September 28th) we did:

"To ask the Minister of Transport what steps are being taken to increase the number of piers and landing-stages in the tidal reaches of the Thames, the need for which has been urged repeatedly during the present year and abundantly demonstrated since the war began."

Captain Euan Wallace gave an encouraging, indeed a grand reply:

"I have approved for the purpose of grant under the Civil Defence Act the construction of a pontoon pier at Putney and a wood pile jetty at Holehaven. I understand that the Port of London Authority have already given instructions for the latter work to be put in hand."

"Grand! Things were moving. Two piers only, but a beginning. And what an advance on March 15th!

"But weeks passed and there was still no activity on the Putney foreshore. We inquired what was happening. We were told, Nothing. For under the Act the Port of London Authority

could only earn for the pier at Putney a grant of fifty per cent. of the cost—and they wanted more.

"Don't think I'm blaming the poor old P.L.A. They don't want a pier at Putney for their own commercial purposes in peace-time; and for war purposes they had already done a lot, and spent a lot, which was really, so to speak, outside their proper beat.

"Still, there were provisions in the Civil Defence Act, I knew, under which a dock or harbour authority, for purely war-work (not on their proper beat) could get a grant of as much as seventeen-twentieths of the cost.

"Why should not the pier at Putney earn that mysterious but substantial fraction?

"I went to the Ministry of Transport to inquire. That Ministry had already done all they could, but they were still kind and keen. Mr. Bernays, the Parliamentary Secretary, burrowed deep into the immense bowels of the Civil Defence Act and he found a queer thing. While it was true that in general a special war service provided by a h. and d. a. could earn a seventeen-twentieth grant, a service for the purpose of collecting, treating and evacuating casualties could qualify for fifty per cent. only. And that seemed to be the main purpose of the pier at Putney. Anyhow, he said sadly, it was a matter for the Ministry of Health.

"Faint, but pursuing, we passed this information to the Ministry of Health, who are now, we believe, considering it.

"A little later (November 14th) the Member for Wandsworth, Mr. Marcus Samuel, took a hand. He asked the Minister of Transport whether the Port of London proposed to construct a pier at Putney as authorised by him.

"The Minister replied:

"This proposal was first put forward in the early part of July when it was thought that a pier at Putney might be of use for the collection and evacuation of casualties. After further consideration in October the Port of London Authority came to the conclusion that the possible utility of the pier for these purposes was insufficient to justify the expenditure that would be involved."

"So," said my poor friend Poker, "we are back at March 15th: and if anyone says that question-asking is a futile game I shall be tempted to agree with him.

"I am all for democracy," said my poor friend Poker. "But there is still no pier at Putney. And, do you know, I am beginning not to care. Those in charge of ambulance boats are worrying—but let them worry. We will attach little balloons to the stretchers and they shall be wafted ashore."

A. P. H.

At the Pictures

CHEER UP

A "happy ending" has been stuck on to the film version of *Golden Boy* (Director: ROUBEN MAMOU-LIAN). This does it no good, of course, as a work of art; and although there is much to enjoy, it seems a pity to have sacrificed the whole point of a story for the sake of sending the less reflective customers away happy. Dramatically the basis of the story is *Joe Bonaparte's* dilemma, his feeling that he must choose between music and boxing and that whichever he chooses it will spoil him for the other. After building a whole picture on this assumption it is not very honest of the adapters (four of them) to imply that *Joe* can go back happily to music after he has irrevocably chosen boxing and indeed broken his violin-fingering hand in its service; and yet that is what they do, thus indicating that he never had any reason to worry at all.

Nevertheless there is much, as I said, to enjoy. *Joe* is played by a newcomer, WILLIAM HOLDEN, who is good, though perhaps not quite at his ease in films yet. The character who appealed to me most was *Joe's* taxi-driver brother-in-law, *Siggie*, played by SAM LEVENE. He is helped a great deal by the dialogue—how one notices a fresh hand in dialogue!—but Mr. LEVENE, as those who saw *Three Men on a Horse* will remember, is a feast in himself.

ADOLPHE MENJOU is the boxing manager, and BARBARA STANWYCK is his girl, who becomes (of course) *Joe's* girl. They both do well, but the outstanding figure I think is the old man, *Joe's* father. LEE J. COBB, as this venerable Italian who passionately believes in the musical genius of his son and saves up to buy him a valuable violin, gives a most impressive and moving performance.

There is also an exceedingly sinister gangster (JOSEPH CALLEIA) and an extremely good fight. What more can you want?

On the Night of the Fire (Director: BRIAN DESMOND HURST) is an almost continuously gloomy story that has not been given a happy ending; but it didn't depress me, and I don't think it will depress anybody who is able to

North-country town. It's easy and perhaps justified to say that Miss WYNYARD is miscast: she did give me the impression of becoming the character only at moments and as if to show that she could do it. For that matter, Mr. RICHARDSON too is by no means so credible a barber here as he was the last time I saw him as one—on the stage, in *Sheppey*. But these flaws, I suggest, hardly matter. They don't affect the main story, which is straightforward inevitable tragedy, or the detail, which is well done, continuously interesting and pictorially good. Sunlight and clear shadows are allowed into these scenes: there's none of that tiresome symbolism by which a tragic narrative is soaked in continual rain (though rain—let's be fair—can make excellent pictures too).

You may remember that I criticised *Poison Pen* the other week because it was a gloomy story that seemed to me artificially done. *On the Night of the Fire* is an equally gloomy story, but it's well done; and that makes all the difference, believe me, to the way you feel afterwards.

However, you may like to be cheered up; and here are WILL HAY, MOORE MARRIOTT and GRAHAM MOFFATT wallowing in foam. *Where's That Fire?* (Director: MARCEL VARNEL) is full of time-honoured slapstick, with two high spots: one, a scene with a pole, and the other a scene in masses of foam. The pole one is the better (they manœuvre it across a street—you know), so it's unfortunate that it comes nearer the beginning; and it's also unfortunate that the foam one is repeated, with inevitably less effect. (The so-called foam is actually more like whitewash, but you know whitewash always has been funny even in small quantities in tubs; and here we have a lake of it, with more streaming out of hoses.) But I think I may safely guarantee you some laughs. The pole episode, so far as I remember, gave me plenty.

R. M.



J.H.D.

(Golden Boy)

A SOB DADDY

Joe Bonaparte WILLIAM HOLDEN
Mr. Bonaparte LEE J. COBB

appreciate details apart from the mere "what-happened-then." This is a British picture, with RALPH RICHARDSON and DIANA WYNYARD as a barber and his wife living in a mean street of a



(On the Night of the Fire)

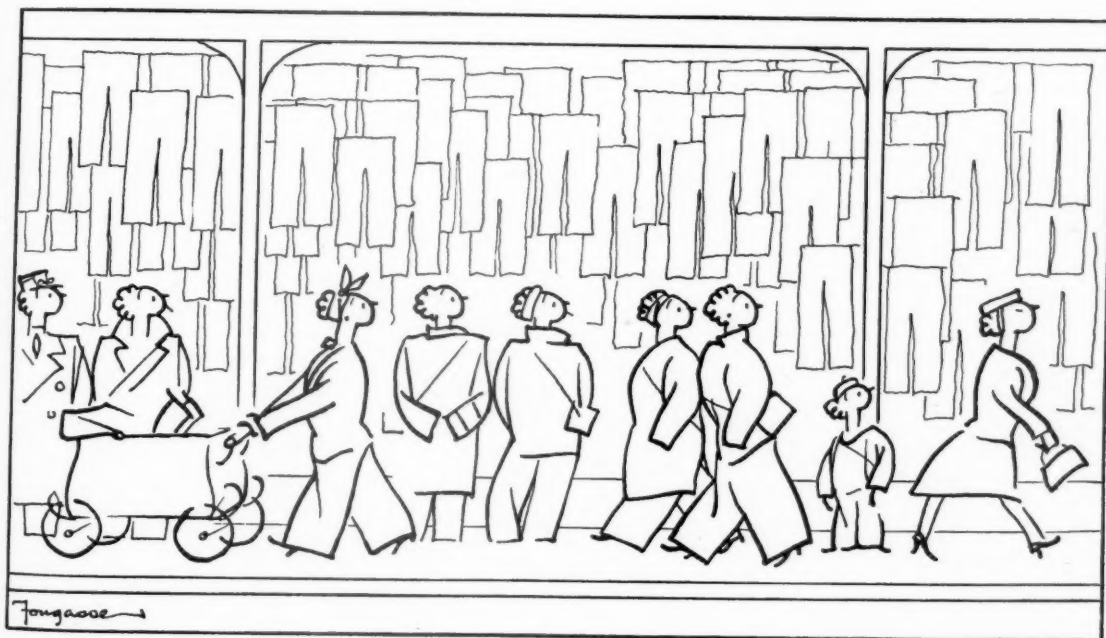
UPS AND DOWNS OF A TROUBLED SOUL
Kobling RALPH RICHARDSON

THE CHANGING FACE OF BRITAIN

XVII.—TROUSERS



1



2



"Knit, knit, knit—that's all one can do these long, dreary evenings."

Behind the Lines

XI.—Travel

FAR be it from a Briton to disparage
Anything born of Commons, Lords and King:
I merely say that in that first-class carriage
I could not see a thing.

Five shapes were there already, five dim figures:
But whether men or women, dark or fair,
Or, if it comes to that, full-blooded niggers,
I knew not. There they were.

We brooded in a silence strange and solemn,
Gazing at ghosts which gazed as dumbly back.
Dumbly our Late Night Final's Stop-Press column
Called to us from the rack.

What thoughts went on behind those hidden faces?
The shape across the way: for all I knew,
Its braces might have been Lord Nuffield's braces,
Its brain Lord Nuffield's too.

This form beside me: Was it saint or villain?—
Colonel or private?—in some training camp?
If I had said "Good evening, Lord Macmillan,"
Would it have said "Lord Stamp"?

Was it, I wondered, kind to its relations?
Did it, I wondered, love its fellow-men? . . .
I wondered even more about the stations
We stopped at now and then.

One would be mine one day; but how to know it?
Heard station-names are sweet, but those unheard
And unillumed are hell—or so the poet
(Keats, I believe) inferred.

We stopped. A form vacated the compartment.
Somehow it *knew* that this was Hadley Wood
(Or Hurstpierpoint). Some quickening at the heart meant
"Go while the going's good."

We stopped. A "GENTLEMEN," reflected sickly
Beneath a dim blue light, had made it plain
To one of us (but how?) that this was Bickley
(Or Bude). He left the train.

We stopped (at BOVRIL, if I got it rightly).
A voice, accompanied by something stout,
Trod on my foot, said "Pardon me" politely
And took its colleague out.

Once more we stopped—this time at PORTERS ONLY.
Mistaking it, perhaps, for Porter's Park,
The fourth man hurried off . . . and left us lonely:
Two of us, in the dark.

Now I could speak. I hailed the fellow blindly:
"Excuse me, Sir, I live at Wiveltree—
Is it the next but one?" She answered kindly,
"It was the last but three." A. A. M.

Investigations of Hector Tumbler

The Perfect Crime

IT is not every day of the week that a wealthy manufacturer of kaleidoscopes is found murdered in a room locked, bolted and shuttered from the inside. It is not every day of the week, in fact, that such a person is found murdered at all. Small wonder, then, that the strange death of Sir William Foghorn at "Tramways," his Richmond villa, should have caused something of a sensation. Small wonder that the police should have been informed. Small wonder—But I had better tell the story from the beginning.

On the night of December 2nd high carnival reigned at "Tramways." Sir William Foghorn was famous for the lavishness of his hospitality. On this occasion he had surpassed himself. It was a fancy-dress party, and among the crowd of Cossacks, taxi-drivers, Chinese princesses and Venezuelan gas-inspectors were many whose names were household words. Even Hector Tumbler, the famous detective, had so far abated his customary dignity as to dress up as a lost-property office. It was a somewhat cumbersome but extremely effective costume.

It was growing late. Only a handful of guests remained. Sir William himself had been absent for some time. It was whispered that he had gone to arrange a final surprise for his guests. And in a sense this was horribly true. For as we stood there, glaring at each other and thinking what a wonderful party it had been, a scream rang out, so horrible, so piercing, that each man mechanically placed his hand on his wallet.

We rushed upstairs to the big room, part bathroom, part

billiard-room, whence the sound seemed to come. The door was locked. We burst it open. There lay the body of Sir William Foghorn. A large brass soup-ladle with which the death-blow had evidently been dealt lay beside him. Near the fire a policeman sat reading a newspaper. I remembered to have seen him among the guests at the party. *But of the murderer there was not a trace.*

We searched every nook and cranny of the room. There was no loophole by which the murderer could have escaped. Not merely had the door been locked from the inside but the windows were shuttered and sacking had been stuffed up the chimney. Even the bath-taps had been stopped up with soap. And yet somehow the criminal had vanished. We stared at each other in bewilderment. The words "the Perfect Crime" were on everyone's lips. Presently the police arrived, thirty of them, with Chief-Inspector Henhouse at their head. We stared at them in bewilderment. They stared back.

In the general confusion Tumbler alone seemed to have retained his senses.

"Whoever the murderer is," he remarked to the Inspector, "he must be still in the house. Therefore the only thing to do is to draw a cordon round it and wait."

Inspector Henhouse nodded. Then, ordering his men to form a cordon, he went to bed. Tumbler and I were not long in following his example.

Next morning the search continued, but to no purpose. The servants were all cross-examined. They could throw no light on the mystery. There seemed to be no motive for the murder of a man who was beloved by millions to whom his kaleidoscopes had brought solace in times of sorrow. One fact, however, was established. Some years before, Sir William had cut off his nephew Reuben, the black sheep of the family, with a sixpenny postal order. High words, as well as a number of bad cheques, had passed between them. Reuben, it was thought, might have borne malice. But as he was believed to have left England for Australia shortly afterwards with a view to becoming a sword-swallower, the clue was a faint one.

Months passed and nothing more came to light. In these discouraging circumstances it was not surprising that some of the police showed signs of boredom or irritation. When a man has drawn a cordon round a house or cross-examined a cook several hundred times without achieving anything it becomes a wearisome business. But Tumbler, whose organising ability was the horror and admiration of his friends, worked wonders. He had already arranged a whist-drive and a ping-pong tournament, and he was busy getting up a football match (Police *versus* The Rest) when Scotland Yard decided to withdraw their men and resign the mystery to the category of unsolved crimes.

It was a painful leave-taking. We had grown attached to the police during their long stay and they, I like to think, to us. Before they left we had a group photograph taken. It hangs on my study wall to this day.

Tumbler of course elected to stay on. It was indeed part of his character to hang on grimly to the bitter end. And in his heart I believe he was glad that the departure of the police left him free to work out his own theories of the crime. Besides, as he said with a smile, it was very comfortable at "Tramways."

For a time we went on living happily enough. Tumbler was busy from morning till night with his experiments, which were of the most varied kind. On one occasion, for instance, he locked himself up in a room and flung the key out of the window. Although it is true he was not murdered as he had expected, he was unable to open the door, and I had to get a locksmith to let him out. Thus valuable information was acquired. I myself had started collecting

butterflies. I had almost forgotten about the murder. And then suddenly all was changed.

One morning I happened to be strolling past the room where Sir William had met his end when I noticed a smell of frying. I tried the door. It was locked. My curiosity was aroused. I took a poker and broke open the door. I stood in surprise on the threshold. A man in a policeman's uniform was frying bacon at the fire.

"You still here?" I said.

Suddenly suspicion dawned in my mind. Somehow I knew now, by the look of terror in this man's eyes, to say nothing of the bowler-hat and umbrella which hung on a peg on the wall, that this was no policeman.

"Who are you, anyhow?" I asked.

"All right," said the man in a low tone. "I give myself up. I murdered him. My name is Reuben Foghorn."

"And you've been here all the time?"

He nodded. "It's the Perfect Crime, you see."

"Well," I said after a pause, "I suppose I'll have to have you arrested. It's rather awkward. You see, the police have gone now."

"What? The police have gone?"

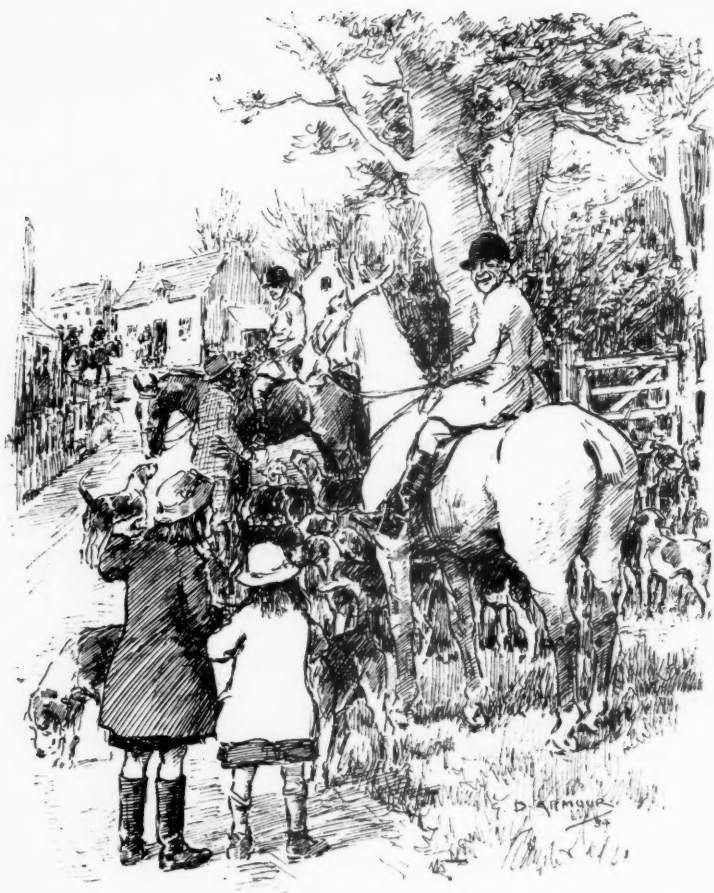
"Yes. Anyhow," I said, "you wait here and I'll go and tell Tumbler about it."

He nodded and took his hat and umbrella from the peg. I found Tumbler alone in his room, seated round a small table in conference. He woke up with a start as I tapped his arm. Together we hurried back to the fatal room. It was empty.

"So he got away?" said Tumbler. "Well, well. Of course it was the Perfect Crime," he added with a certain satisfaction.



"Even if the defendant can prove he wasn't driving on the wrong side of the road, your Worship, he hadn't got his respirator with him."



"Crikey, won't they catch it if a copper comes along—all them dogs and not one of them wiv a collar on!"

housemaster

THERE, that's the title, just as I jotted it down on an envelope-back when the inspiration came to me. Somebody said something, I expect (or I might even have thought of something), which made me say "Ah!" and make a note of it. I don't know where I was when it happened; possibly having lunch in my A.B.C., so that everybody stopped eating when they heard my "Ah!" and saw my fountain-pen briefly crystallise a golden thought, taking me for Mr. Godfrey Winn and continuing their meal more quietly. Perhaps I was sitting in my

own arm-chair at home, engaged in my favourite experiment of seeing how near the fire I could hold my feet without actually setting light to them, my wife sitting demurely knitting and taking no notice of me, however many times I said "Ah!" She knows of course that I am not Mr. Godfrey Winn.

Be that as it may (or was), I shall now write an article on the subject of *housemaster*. It is not an easy subject. You can see that for yourself. Possibly this specimen of my handwriting is difficult for you to read, and if so I

sympathise. I can't read it either, that is why it is not an easy subject, but I know with certainty that it *is* a subject, and remembering how in my early days as a student of journalism by post I was warned never to waste an idea and encouraged to sit up in the middle of the night and make a memorandum of particularly entertaining dreams in my bedside notebook, I am determined to write an article about it.

I wish I still had that notebook; there was some good stuff in that book. But after half-a-dozen really bad colds, culminating in pneumonia, my mother threw it away, saying that the night was made for sleeping, or words to that effect. My mother did not read Byron. So after that I took to envelope-backs and they have done very well ever since.

Scrutinising this particular envelope-back at arm's-length through one eye I have tried to make something of the inscription, and by allowing the light to fall on it from various angles I have evolved a theory or two. At first it seemed plainly something to do with Germany, for it had *haus* at the beginning and *berg* at the end. Then a fractional turn of the wrist changed it all, and in kaleidoscopic succession I read *Man question*, *Modulation*, *Undulatory* and *Word making*; a *Laundryman* and a *housemaster* made a brief appearance, but vanished almost at once in favour of *hindquarters*, *Maud Waters* and *Loud Wireless*.

I didn't attach much importance to any of these. Musical and military matters I am ignorant of, and I know no Mauds—not now. The others were obvious misinterpretations. However, I wrote them all down on another envelope-back and carefully studied those I could read, but apart from *Hindenburg* and *Lord Wilson*, none of them struck any real chord, and even these two represented circles in which I do not revolve.

So I attacked in another sector, holding the thing edgewise and squinting along it with the other eye. This gave instant results; a slightly elliptical *New advertising*, a distinct *hard-working*, and the obsequious shadow of a *headwaiter*. Still I was not satisfied. I did scribble down *hardworking* and compare it unhopefully with the original note, but as they both took on the form *Brandenberg* for a second and then reverted stubbornly to *housemaster*, I sat back and sighed a little.

Frankly, I am now beginning to despair of getting the article written. My determination to write about *housemaster* at all costs is gradually ebbing. My wife, who has been sitting knitting demurely and taking no notice

of me, says it is my filthy handwriting, and although I resent her sitting there knitting and demurely saying things like this, I have to agree that she is right, because looking at the thing again I suddenly see it in a new light. Firelight, actually. I can't think why it's eluded me all this time. It is filthy handwriting.

Our War Aims Committee

THE Otherham War Aims Committee would never have been started if the Government had given a clear lead: it was only because it was felt that somebody should state our War Aims definitely that our meetings came to be held. Territorial matters we did not so much concern ourselves with, because we felt that with all the maps that members of the Government would have at their disposal they would be likely to know more about geography than we did, and so our debates ranged only around the main proposal, which was that of Pifferley. He suggested that as one face had really become a terror to Europe there could be no lasting peace until its expression was altered, thereby not only allaying some natural alarm in small countries, but probably calming by reflex action the mind behind that expression. "My suggestion, therefore," he said, "is that his moustache ought to be ceded, and either worn in a locket as a decoration round the neck of one of our generals or a general of our allies, or preserved in the War Museum, and of course forbidden to be regrown. To put it in more soldierly language, his lip should be demilitarised."

Our Vicar is usually a man of peace, but I never saw him more roused. He is a member of our War Aims Committee, and he was up at once.

"I must protest," he said, "most vehemently against Mr. Pifferley's suggestion. It is efforts like that, to humiliate a defeated adversary, that make lasting hatreds and sow seeds of future wars. The lip would be almost certain to be militarised again in a few years, and we should be faced with the choice of going to war once more or submitting to the breach of a solemn covenant."

"But would he go to war over a moustache?" asked Pifferley.

"Most certainly he would," said the Vicar. "You don't wear one, and perhaps do not realise what moustaches

mean to men who do. And besides that, the more eccentric that a moustache is, the more comic that it may appear to you, the more unique it is and the dearer it is to its owner. I cannot possibly agree to your suggestion. In fact if you insist on it I shall have to resign, much as I have enjoyed these evenings."

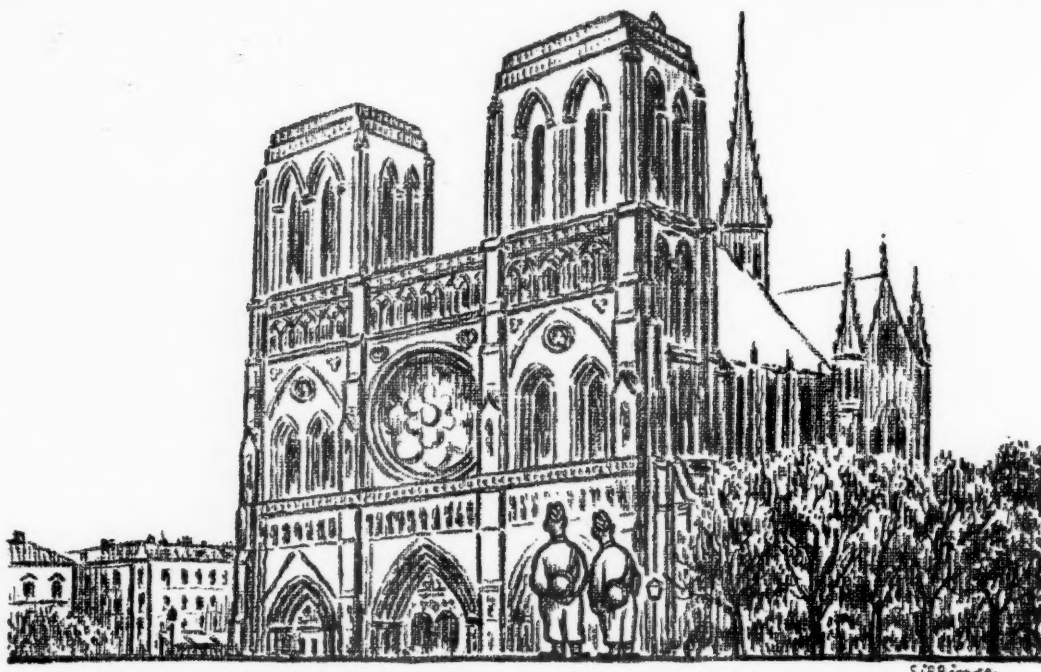
When we saw that the Vicar really meant it we all reasoned with Pifferley, and I am happy that it was a suggestion of mine that eventually restored calm. What I said was: "Haven't we always stood for compromise all through our history? And isn't it a time for compromise now? Won't Mr. Pifferley

give up half his demands, and won't the Vicar meet him half-way?"

And that was the very thing that was agreed on; for the Vicar is never to be outdone when it comes to harmonious concession. And when we forwarded our War Aims in their final form to our Member we were happily unanimous. The actual words of our recommendation are these: "At the termination of hostilities half his moustache should be ceded, and the half of his lip from which it is taken should become a non-military zone, and never be cultivated again without permission in writing from Whitehall, the Quai d'Orsay and Warsaw."



SURPRISE!



"Fair takes yer breaf away, don't it, chum—Notre Dame de Gay Paree!"

London Leave

I CAME up from Kent, and at Waterloo
I found that the world was a horrible blue—
Pale blue platform, pale blue stair,
Pale blue porters everywhere.

Pale blue passengers passed in flocks
(Each bearing his pale blue cardboard box)
And, looking behind, no doubt they could see
A wondering, worrying, pale blue me.

Take me back to my battery station,
To the fields and the starlit sky,
Where a torch may shine
With never a fine
To remember the black-out by.
Take me back to the wet canteen, boys,
To the laughter and life and light.
Let the good ale drown
All my thoughts of Town—
The City of Dreadful Night.

Out in the streets it was much, much worse.
With stumble, expletive, crash and curse
I tottered along thro' the inky black,
While comparative strangers bumped my back.

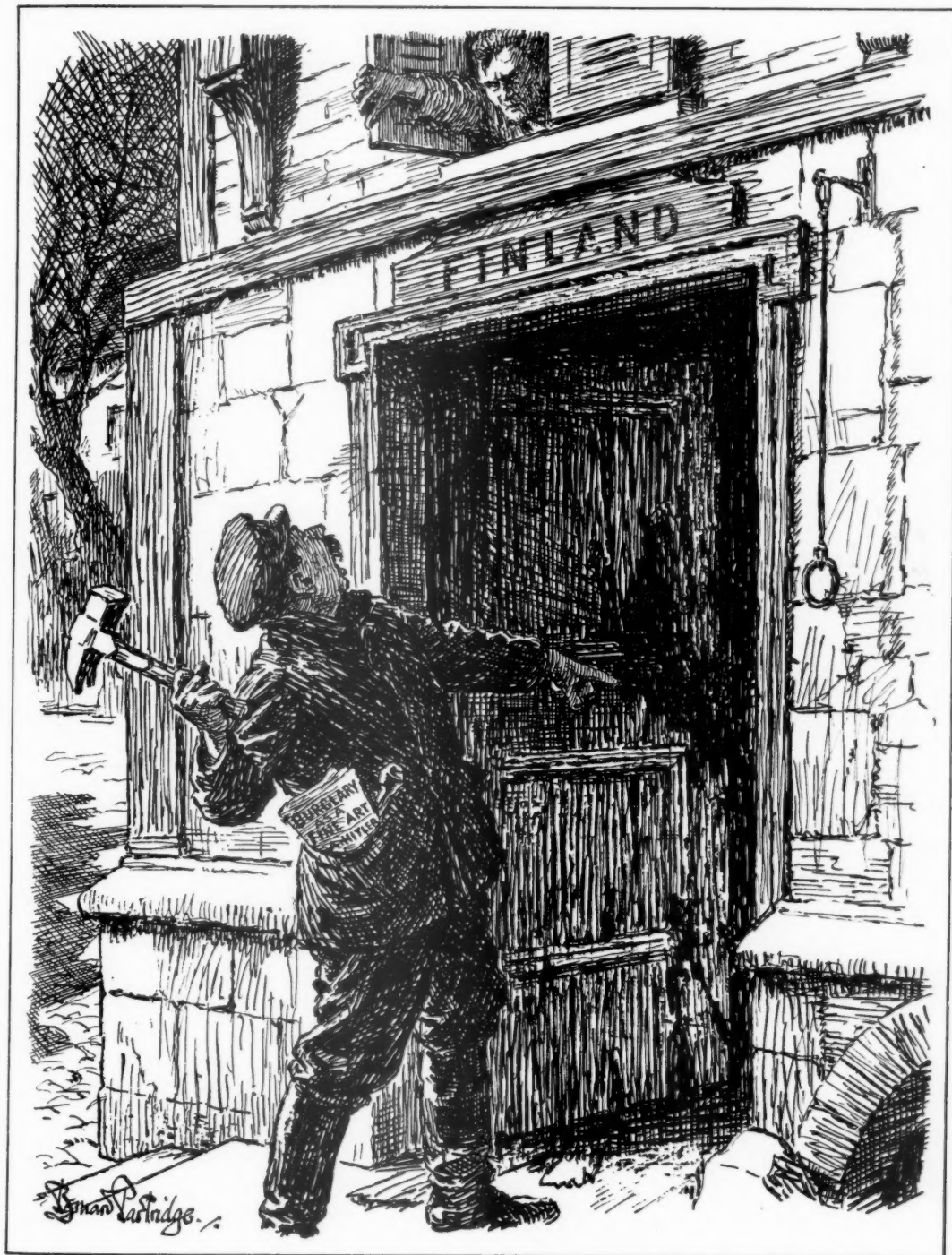
Gone were the freedom of army days
And the careless active service ways.
Here I encountered, as never before,
The horrid realities. This was War!

Take me back to my gun position,
To the trench and the huts I know,
Where the slim three-seven
Points high to heaven
In a friendly torch-born glow.
Take me back to the wilds of Kent, boys,
Where the hurricane lamps shine bright,
And let me forget
(Tho' it haunts me yet)
The City of Dreadful Night.

But I found that the worst was yet to come.
Remote from the torpid traffic's hum,
In every blacked-out home and club,
Restaurant, theatre, milk-bar, pub,

Ceaseless and senseless was the flow
Of news that the papers didn't know—
News that the Ministry only sends
To obscure relations of somebody's friends.

Take me back to the old encampment
Where the friendly billets gleam,
Where the only news
Is the sergeant's views
On the battery football team.
Take me back to my home from home, boys,
Bring peace to my aching sight;
And let me ignore
The seat of war—
The City of Dreadful Night!



THE OLD STORY

"You gave me insufferable provocation. When I wanted to rob you I found you had locked the door."

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From the Home Front

On Going Sick

"GOING sick" in the Army, as Gunner Briggs discovered to his disgust and dismay last week, is a serious and slow-moving affair; it has to be done decently and in order or not at all.

Gunner Briggs had something of a cough and decided, like the true patriot he is, that he could better attend to the business of outwitting the manifold wiles of Hitler if this petty distraction were removed. "I'll get a bottle of medicine," he said to his immortal soul, and went forthwith to interview the Orderly Bombardier.

"You mean you want to go sick?" said Bombardier Crumb.

"No, no," said Gunner Briggs. "I just want a bottle of cough mixture."

"You'll have to go sick," said the Bombardier firmly.

"All right," said Gunner Briggs with fine courage, "I'll go sick. What do I have to do?"

"Report to the Orderly Bombardier at seven-thirty hours to-morrow morning."

"Report what?"

"That you want to go sick."

"But cor stone me up a gum tree," said Gunner Briggs, who gets some of his expressions from the Sunday papers. "I've just reported that."

"That will do," said Bombardier Crumb. He has a proper understanding of the respect due to superior rank.

So at seven-thirty hours next morning Gunner Briggs, coughing delicately, presented himself before the new Orderly Bombardier, "Daredevil" Hooper, and made his announcement. "The fact is," he said airily, "I want a bottle of cough mixture."

The Bombardier was not interested. He is a decent kindly fellow at heart, but when he is performing any kind of official function his whole mind is concentrated, to the exclusion of every other thought, on the performance of that function strictly in accordance with the regulations. If Gunner Briggs had announced the imminence of twins Hooper would have wetted his pencil and produced his sheaf of forms with exactly the same majestic, almost policeman-like, deliberation.

"Name?" said Bombardier Hooper.

Gunner Briggs, with justifiable exasperation, since the two have known each other for about four years, said his name was BRIGGS, and spelt it.

"Christian names?" asked Hooper, rolling on.

Briggs gave them—somewhat shyly, for the interview lacked that privacy he always desired when his second and third baptismal names had to be mentioned—and did not forbear to ask what on earth all this had to do with it. "It is my chest that has the cough," he explained, "not my Christian names."

"Rank?" said Hooper.

"Gunner."

"Age?"

"Twenty-six."

"Religious denomination?"

"Hey!" said Briggs. "Look on the bright side. It's only a slight cough really," and he coughed two or three times, very slightly, to show Hooper how tenuous and ephemeral a thing his cough was. Hooper, however, had already moved on to the next point.

When it was all over and Hooper had read the whole thing through to the defendant, and Briggs had pointed out an error (pardonable enough) in the spelling of his second name, and Hooper had finally appended his signature in the bottom right-hand corner, Briggs, by way of a joke, asked him whether he ought not to have a duplicate, just to be on the safe side.

"It has to be made out in triplicate," said Hooper haughtily and with complete truth; and that ended the interview.

After this Briggs says he began to think that perhaps he had been taking this cough of his too lightly; after all, if the authorities thought it was worth while taking all this trouble over it, the thing must be more deep-seated than he had imagined. And sure enough, when he tried two or three more coughs to see how they went, it did seem as if there was a more formidable *hacking* sort of note about them. He wore a scarf at breakfast, and by nine o'clock, when they came to tell him it was time to get ready, his forehead was quite damp and his eyes had a feverish look. "Bronchitis," he muttered to himself once or twice. "Sure of it."

It came as rather a shock that they expected him to make the two-mile journey to the Medical Post in a two-ton truck. It seemed to Briggs, bouncing about on a floor that had recently been intimate with coke, that at the eleventh hour the Army's solicitous care for his cough had somewhat broken down. But he made no protest. He felt, he says, too low even to swear.

* * * * *

"Well, and what's the matter with you this morning?" said the M.O., a genial man.

To Briggs, who had coughed three times, heart-rendingly, on entering the room, the question seemed superfluous, even offensive.

"It's my cough," he pointed out severely, and coughed again.

"Any headache?" said the M.O. "Any sickness? Any pains in the back? Any discomfort *here*? Eating all right?" He then proceeded to rap Gunner Briggs over the heart, tap him on the back, slap him in the midriff and generally carry on as doctors do carry on when they can't think of any more questions to ask. Then he got out his stethoscope.

"Cough," said the M.O.

"In triplicate?" murmured Briggs. He was sick of coughing.

"Eh?" said the M.O.

"Eugh! Eugh! Eugh!" said Briggs.

"Good," said the M.O. "Cough again."

"Ahuff! Ahuff! Ahuff!" said Briggs.

"Excellent," said the M.O. "Once more."

"Hara-humph!" said Briggs.

That convinced him. "H'm," said the M.O. "You've got a bit of a cough. I'll give you a mixture."

* * * * *

"So you see," says Gunner Briggs, retailing his experiences, "I got my cough mixture all right. It's just that the Army has its own way of doing things." H. F. E.



"I think the Committee might have given me more sandbags, Mr. Pennefeather!"

Moving with the Times

WHAT you wants is a nood," said Mr. Goodge.

Having reached this decision after concentrating silently on the problem for three minutes, Mr. Goodge slipped back into another bout of concentration. We thought it best, therefore, to wait for confirmation of his theory before applauding it.

Presently Mr. Goodge spoke again. "That's about it," he said. "You could have a nood."

The ring of conviction, however, was still absent, and we continued to wait. It was certainly a knotty problem, this problem of our sitting-room chimney, although we suspect it to be a problem that everyone who lives in an old cottage has to face sooner or later. But we have never before lived in an old cottage, and we were at a loss to understand why a chimney which is about the size of a lift-shaft should so

uncompromisingly reject the smoke from the fire and drive it out into the room. For this is its whimsical habit, and soon after the fire is lit, do what we will, the room is as full of smoke as a box on a bonfire.

We first spoke of it to Mr. Goodge the blacksmith when Mr. Goodge, who is also the postman, called with our morning mail one day. Mr. Goodge obligingly offered to investigate the matter there and then. So we admitted Mr. Goodge and conducted him to the fire-place—a fire-place which we had ourselves discovered by removing a kitchen range and two flanking cupboards; a huge fire-place.

It seemed now that Mr. Goodge, having taken up his position before it and contemplated it very thoughtfully for three minutes, was getting down to the root of the matter. But we were too hasty in this assumption. Mr.

Goodge abruptly altered his line of approach and shrewdly observed that we had moved the range. This we admitted.

"It didn't smoke before," said Mr. Goodge reprovingly.

This we also admitted.

"I dare say," resumed Mr. Goodge presently, "that's what's causing all the trouble."

We found ourselves in agreement with Mr. Goodge on this point also. Mr. Goodge was then silent again.

"O' course," he said eventually, "you could put the range back again if you had a mind to."

We assured Mr. Goodge that we hadn't a mind to, and then waited anxiously for him to affirm his faith in the remedy which he had originally advanced.

Suddenly, gripped with the pang of an idea, Mr. Goodge walked forward

into the fire-place itself and looked up the chimney. A piece of soot immediately fell on Mr. Goodge's upturned face, but he ignored it and in due course emerged with the air of one who has satisfied his own conclusions and also his conscience.

"Can't do better than have a nood," he announced decisively.

Satisfied that Mr. Goodge would now stand or fall by this suggestion we ventured to ask what a nood might be. It then came to light that Mr. Goodge was referring to a hood—a large wedge-shaped funnel fixed over the fire to assist the draught. So we requested Mr. Goodge to make a nood at once, and this Mr. Goodge consented to do.

Just as he was leaving he found he had a postcard for us.

"It's from the military," said Mr. Goodge, whose form of national service is the voluntary censorship of all postcards. "They wants to see you next week." So they did. We applied some weeks ago for a commission and were now required to attend for medical examination. Which has a bearing on this episode.

The next morning Mr. Goodge came back to take measurements. In the afternoon he returned to verify them. On the following morning he came again to inform us that he could not carry out the actual fixing of the hood. That afternoon he appeared once more, this time with a piece of sheet-iron to see if it would fit across the chimney to seal the shaft against all draughts that happened to waft around the hood that Goodge built. He came back the next day with the sheet duly cut, and it was too short, even by eight inches, and too wide, even by a foot.

At this stage we told Mr. Goodge that if he would kindly let us have the hood itself we would do all the sealing up that was necessary. Mr. Goodge doubted our ability to do this and was apparently most unwilling to let the hood out of his own hands, but we forced him to surrender.

"I'd better come along though," he said distrustfully, "to see you sets it low enough over the fire."

We told Mr. Goodge to come along by all means—to charge overtime—to do whatever he liked, so long as he let us have the hood immediately.

"Oh, the 'ood!" exclaimed Mr. Goodge, grasping the subject of the conversation. "The 'ood!" He looked down at the piece of sheet-iron which he had taken three days to cut carefully into the wrong shape. "I 'aven't started a-making the 'ood yet."

We breathed once or twice more deeply than usual and then asked point-blank if he was sure a nood would do.

"Oh, yes," replied Mr. Goodge, "a nood'll do you."

Later that day we went off to the recruiting board, were duly interviewed and prodded by five doctors, and returned home in time to go along and see how Mr. Goodge had progressed. We found him shoeing a horse. He anticipated our question by asking how we had got on with the medical board. We told him (which was true) that we had been put into Grade II and had almost been relegated to Grade III.

"Ah!" said Mr. Goodge with curious satisfaction, "then they won't let you join up yet awhile. That'll give

us plenty of time," proceeded Mr. Goodge, skilfully avoiding a kick from the horse, "to make a rare proper job o' that chimbley of yours—whether we uses a nood or whether," added Mr. Goodge, evading another kick, "we 'ave to think of another way out o' the difficulty. Whoa, there!"

We watched Mr. Goodge elude the horse's third attempt to kick him as he bent down. Then, maddened by Mr. Goodge's ineptitude but maddened still more by the ineptitude of the horse, we came home to a room as full of smoke as a box on a bonfire.



"It's the Mate. 'E will 'ave it there's nothink to choose between me an' that there Ribbintrop."



"Where do you think that irritating little squeak came from, George?"

The Day We Moved Aunt Milly

AMONG my mother's chief characteristics was a deep feeling for the sufferings of others and a determination to contribute to their relief. The finest example of these noble impulses that I can recall is the occasion on which we moved my Aunt Milly.

My aunt lived a short distance from us. Even as a girl she had had a premonition that she would become bedridden, and one morning in middle-life she woke up and announced that she was. We used to go over to visit her several times a year, and always came away impressed by the probability that we should never see her again. Dressed in our Sunday clothes, we would stand about the mahogany bed for an hour or so while Aunt Milly expressed her gratitude for having been spared for one more visit and her resignation to the fact that this would be the last.

On the day we moved my Aunt Milly she was suffering from a severe fit of depression and wanted to kiss us all good-bye. My younger brother Henry, who was a susceptible child, burst into tears. Afterwards he said that it was because he feared that if Aunt Milly intended to kiss anyone, he would be the first to have to submit to this ordeal. But I think that at the time he was genuinely moved.

My mother took out a pocket handkerchief to wipe her eyes, and my father asked Aunt Milly if she felt any pain and where it was. At this Aunt Milly became offended and began sobbing herself, and when my father turned to my mother for sympathy, explaining that he was only doing his best to help, he was told not to be heartless. Altogether it was a very trying interview, and we were all glad to get downstairs again.

On the way downstairs my mother and my father began to discuss the reason for my Aunt Milly's gloom. My mother was convinced that my Aunt Milly was dying, and when my father asked what she could be dying of, she reminded him that my Aunt Milly had already had one premonition, and despite the fact that no doctor could discover why, there was no doubt at all that she was bedridden. After this they began to discuss other reasons, and before long my mother conceived the notion that my Aunt Milly would be much more cheerful if she could obtain a change of scenery. My father agreed with this, but could not think how she could obtain a change of scenery as long as she was bedridden. "We could move her downstairs," said my mother.

There were two great difficulties about moving my Aunt Milly down-

stairs, one geographical, the other psychological. The staircase of her house was straight, steep, and very narrow. It had no open side, but ran between an outer and an inner wall. It had a handrail on one side. Moreover my aunt's home was so full of furniture that the only way to move her from one room to another was to shift the contents of both rooms into the garden and then shift them back again. The other difficulty was the fact that my Aunt Milly objected as soon as the subject was broached, and continued to object all the time we were shifting her bedroom furniture into the garden. Then, when we came to take the bed she refused to get out of it, and declared that if we were going to move her it was against her will, and we should have to move her bed and all. This we decided to do.

Before we began to move my aunt, my father fetched a ruler and measured the staircase. Then he came into the bedroom and measured the bed, and found that the bed was three inches wider than the staircase. My Aunt Milly bobbed up at this news and said that it was clearly impossible to move her in the circumstances, and my father was inclined to agree with her. My mother, however, thought that there must be some way out of the difficulty if we could only think of it. My elder brother Jim wanted to knock a hole in the roof and ceiling and hoist my Aunt Milly out with ropes, but my father said that this was impracticable as we had no ropes.

At last my father decided that if we tilted the bed slightly it would go down the stairs as it was. My Aunt Milly said she refused to be tilted, but my mother said if she would not get out of bed she would have to be, so we started to put our plan into action.

As the head of the bed was heavier than the foot it was arranged that this should be taken by my father and my elder brother Jim, and should be in front. The foot of the bed was to be managed by my younger brother Henry and me, while my mother went to the bottom of the stairs ready to help my father should it become necessary.

We negotiated the door of my aunt's room successfully, turned the corner at the top of the stairs, and began to descend. As we tilted the bed my father found that the new angle necessitated a change of grip, so he told my elder brother Jim to hold on for a moment. Unfortunately the change of grip was just as necessary for Jim as for my father, and he was unable to hold on. There was a slight jolt, and the bed, with my Aunt Milly



in it, became firmly wedged in the staircase.

Although the mishap was quite unforeseen, we were none of us dismayed except my Aunt Milly, who seemed to lose heart altogether. After some preliminary pushing and heaving which was clearly useless, my father inspected the bed very carefully and said that he thought the handrail was causing the jam, and that if we could only saw this off everything would be all right. So he sent my elder brother Jim to borrow a saw from a neighbour.

The handrail was soon dismantled and we took up our positions ready to move the bed again. But when we tried to lift it nothing happened. It was as firmly fixed as ever.

My mother now called up from the bottom of the stairs, suggesting that my younger brother Henry should crawl under the bed with a candle to see if he could discover what was impeding progress. When she heard this my Aunt Milly came to life again and dared anyone to crawl under her bed with a candle. She said that whatever indignity she might suffer, she had no intention of allowing herself to be burnt alive. So my younger brother Henry was told to crawl under the bed without a candle and to observe as much as he could in the semi-darkness.

When he emerged Henry said that the top of the bed was quite free, and that we need not have taken down the handrail. It was the legs that were stuck.

In an instant my father decided that the only thing to do was to take off the legs. He sawed the ones on his side

half-way through, and passing the saw up to our end told us to do the same thing there. Then he asked my mother to procure some string, and tied a length round each leg. At a given signal my father, my elder brother Jim, my younger brother Henry and I all tugged at our piece of string. There was a rending sound, followed by a crash, and the bed-frame settled firmly in the space vacated by the legs.

Unfortunately we found that we were now no better off than before, for what was left of the bed was quite immovable. But by this time my Aunt Milly was extremely annoyed. She told us that she did not mind what we did as long as we got her out of this as rapidly as possible. So my father sent my elder brother Jim round to the neighbour again and told him to bring back a crowbar. He had determined upon a desperate measure.

The partition dividing the staircase from the rooms was a wooden one, and it was my father's intention to break it down and force an entry for my Aunt Milly's bedstead. He thought that if he made the hole just where the bed was now resting it would come through into the downstairs room, which was where we wanted Aunt Milly to be. It is true she would make her entrance rather nearer the ceiling than the floor, but to my elder brother Jim's delight my father was now prepared to borrow ropes to lower her.

So, crowbar in hand, my father attacked the partition and before long succeeded in making a good-sized gap, and, to our relief, when we tried to lift the bed it came away easily. There was

only one minor disappointment, and this was that owing to a slight miscalculation, instead of being able to lower my Aunt Milly into the downstairs room, we found that we would have to lift her into the bedroom she had just vacated.

At this point my aunt's suspicion of my father's activities got the better of her conviction that she was bedridden. We lifted the bed, but she was not in it. She had decided to walk.

COME AND LOOK AT PICTURES

THE National Gallery and the Tate may be bare of pictures, but until December 20th there is a free show of them on week-days between 10 A.M. and 8 P.M. At the City Literary Institute, Stukeley Street, W.C.2 (near the Holborn Restaurant), there is an "Art for the People" Exhibition where you may see works by SICKERT, JOHN, ORPEN, PAUL NASH, DUFFY, EPSTEIN, VLAMINCK, DUNCAN GRANT, CHRISTOPHER WOOD, NEVINSON, CHIRICO, R. O. DUNLOP, MARK GERTLER and other modern masters. There are guide-lecturers to answer questions, and once or twice a week talks are given by experts. It is all cheering, stimulating—and free.

Passed by Censor

"It has been estimated that the number of people in the ancient world, previous to the Flood, reached 549,755,000,000."

Accrington Observer and Times.

"THE SKUNK HAS RETURNED"
Fashion-page Heading.

Why not lock him out for the night?





"Someone seems to be trying to attract our attention."

The Blue Balloon

AT first sight the small blue balloon was philosophically accepted by those who saw it as a bomb, even though it approached Rathberry so very slowly, and moved obliquely instead of coming straight to earth. Other and better-informed spectators who knew something of the strange ways of modern belligerents expressed the opinion that it had something to do with the landing of spies in this country. "They're ploppin' them down constant at the back of that magnet line," one man said, "but they must get up again the best way they can when their notes is took."

It was Mrs. Foley who first recognised the drifting object for what it really was—a toy balloon; and when the airy traveller came to a temporary halt among the bare branches of a chestnut tree the watchers could see for themselves that she was right. A toy balloon it was. But instead of calming any fears they might have had, this realisation caused the first qualms of uneasiness.

More to be dreaded in these days than any unlikely parachute was a toy balloon. According to a recent paragraph in the local weekly these apparently innocent playthings had been at it again in that country which, as one

of Cloney's ex-Service men has said, "Ireland is neuthral for." He said more than this, and said it grimly: "An' we may all bear the blunt of it," he went on, "if so be we're Irish"; for he remembered his cheap trip to London last July, when he was arrested four times during the week-end.

Miss Hanrahan the postmistress, who was among the watchers, thought at once of the two green letter-boxes; for it seemed to her that toy balloons and pillar-boxes had for some time been inextricably mixed. Leaving the ever-growing group, she hurried back to the Post Office, determined to guard the slot in the wall against all foes. When she found the opening completely choked by the bundle of newspapers posted every week to Mrs. Fitzgerald's nephew by the baffled Delia, who has discovered that too forcible a feeding of the slot has a disastrous effect upon the wrapper, Miss Hanrahan left it so gagged and felt none of the annoyance usually caused by the discovery. Patsy Kelly was dispatched, much against his will, to stand by the other letter-box at the far end of the one long street. "If it was to bust up in your very puss," the postmistress said of the balloon, "don't let it in to start anny of its tirations among the mails."

By the time he got back to the chestnut tree—by what his father calls "a circuitous rout"—the scene had completely changed, for a gentle gust of wind had loosened the uncertain hold of a bare branch and had set the blue balloon adrift once more. With it, though some distance below, went the watchers, waving hats and even aprons in the air and stumbling over any obstacle their feet might encounter. Not that they were according a civic welcome to the newcomer, though it looked rather like that—they were really doing their very best to keep it from landing in the village. When the balloon showed its intention of coming to rest in Foley's front garden Mrs. Foley's shrieks brought her youngest daughter rushing from the house. In the quite excusable belief that her mother wanted the rubber globe caught, Stasia very nearly succeeded in doing so, only to bring down a storm of abuse on to her bewildered head. "If you were wanted to tether a thing," Mrs. Foley said crossly, "it's more nor likely dissipatin' it you'd be."

But no amount of discouragement can keep a toy balloon afloat indefinitely on a calm day, and this one lay at last among the topmost twigs of Kane's privet hedge, while those who had tried hardest to drive it on fell back to await an explosion that failed to come. The cover of the blue balloon

was weather-beaten and the letters printed thereon were dim. Young Kane spelled them out. "I R—" he read, "an' I think it's an Ah"; and his hearers nodded. They had expected that, though the number 14 puzzled them.

Next morning the intruder still rested against the privet hedge and passers-by made it quite clear to young Kane that on him and his immediate family lay the sole responsibility for removing it. No one else would touch it: as they expressed it truthfully, they had no call to interfere. While young Kane pointed out that he had been one of the last to see it, after the others had been, he said, "follyin' it like Pied Pipers, an' roarin' regardless."

The dispute was at its height when Mick Doyle, passing with his employer's daily paper, halted to read aloud some of the headlines. While he waited there, young Kane took his stand behind him and read, a little more rapidly, for himself. Then, to the admiring amazement of all watchers, he went back to the hedge and, lifting the balloon with both hands, he passed into the house. In awed silence his former critics settled down to hear Mick read aloud not only headlines but one whole paragraph. "All the numbered toy balloons released by Santa Claus from the windows of Messrs. Bird's stores last week have been returned and the prizes claimed," he read, "except No. 14. Anyone finding a blue balloon marked BIRD 14 should post the envelope back to Bird's of Ballykealy, when the prize will be sent on."

The now stricken silence was still unbroken when young Kane looked out through the open door: "It wasn't an Ah," he said excitedly, "it was a D, an' the B was teetotally obliterated."

Then he closed the door.

D. M. L.

The Shop

(The Royal Military Academy is to be closed.)

YOU gunners of the past, give ear;
Old sappers, hear my call;
I do not come to give you cheer,
Far from it; not at all;
Let none, however tough his clay,
Withhold a manly drop;
To put the matter shortly, They
Are closing down The Shop.

O Academe of deathless fame
Where we, green snookers, met
To hear awhile the noble name
Of Gentleman Cadet,

Whom one of those unmanly
slurs
That sting one now and then
Defined as almost officers
And not quite gentlemen.

'Twas there our young career
began
With that *al fresco* plunge
To which by iron law we ran
Clad only with a sponge;
Icy the bath, and no mistake;
Whistling the wintry air;
'Twas hard, but doubtless helped to
make
The fellows that we were.

The halls where graver men instilled
The lore of sap and gun,
The gym, the front on which we
drilled,
I see them now, each one;
And here, with many a strangled
yawn,
The sad defaulter paced
The "hoexter" which at crack of
dawn
Was little to his taste.

A dark thought comes. On yon green
sward

In a most vital match
I dropped a man before he'd scored;
It was a sitting catch;
He made a hundred. I have known
Much sorrow since and kissed
The penal rod, but I bemoan
Still, still that man I missed.

But do you sometimes live again
Those hours when we were free
To gather with our pipes and drain
The bland but social tea?
And stands the popshop where it did
Whither one hastened down
To glean a temporary quid
For a mild day in town?

We long have walked our several ways
And are not like to meet,
But, brethren of those early days
Whom from afar I greet,
May it be ours again to mix
As oft of yore, and swop
In some great tea-squad o'er the Styx
Old memories of The Shop.

DUM-DUM.



"My goodness, my Lord, do be careful!"



"Muvver says I don't need to bring my gas-mask, Miss, 'cause I ain't got no sense of smell."

Little Fiddle-on-the-Green Still Smiling

"I'M so sorry for you, Miss Little-mug."

"Dear, I must ask you not to say that. You mean it kindly, I know, but it's altogether misleading and sounds quite as though I were complaining—a thing I should never do, I hope, at any time. (As a mere child, I always preferred torture—actual physical torture at the stake—to making any complaint. I was like that.) And most certainly, with a war raging all round me, I should be even *less* likely to utter a syllable. Besides, the carpets can be cleaned, and the house repainted, and the furniture no doubt replaced to a certain extent when the children have gone back to Poplar—if Poplar is still there for them to go back to. Dear, may I ask you *not* to move my dear grandfather's old meerschaum about like that? No doubt it's the war,

but I hardly seem able to bear the wanton destruction of all that I care about."

"I'm terribly sorry. Perhaps you'd rather I came back some other time?"

"No, dear, no. Any time is equally full of distress and worry just now. Did you wish to see me about anything in particular, dear?"

"Only to see how you were getting on, and your little evacuees, and to talk to you about getting up some kind of Christmas treat for them all in the village. *What*, Miss Littlemug? I mean, what did you say?"

"Nothing, dear. Not a word. I may have burst out laughing, without thinking what I was doing, but if so it was only a laugh. Ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear—oh, dear!"

"Pray don't say that, there can be no occasion for it whatever. I simply said that I couldn't help being intensely

amused, that was all. It does just happen that I've been working myself to the bone, *quite literally*, to provide amusement and entertainment for these children, but of course I won't pretend for a moment that I can provide *pâté de foie gras* and champagne and fifty-guinea Christmas-trees for them."

"I'm glad of that, Miss Littlemug, because I don't honestly think that children under seven would really care about *pâté de foie gras* and champagne, and I don't feel their parents would want them to have fifty-guinea Christmas trees either."

"I must ask you, if you have no objection, not to *mention* the word parents to me."

"I won't if you don't wish it, Miss Littlemug. Have they—Is there anything *wrong* with them?"

"Not at all, dear. Far from it. Why should there be anything wrong with people who can dash about all over England at week-ends and take their children out in motor-cars to the pictures, and leave them in absolute ribbons, just as they seemed to be settling down nicely, for other people to cope with."

"Is that what they've been doing?"

"That, and a great deal else. Naturally, I don't want to sound as though I were exaggerating—though in actual point of fact one *couldn't* exaggerate—but I always *prefer* understatement. It's my way. So I shall say nothing whatever, except that the children all seemed to be improving in health and spirits and cleanliness—and we know very well what cleanliness is next to, and was a very long way removed from indeed when they first came—until, as I say, they were completely stampeded by this herd of wild buffaloes."

"Buffaloes, Miss Little-mug?"

"Dear, need you take everything I say quite literally? I don't mean that buffaloes with horns and heads and legs and things came charging down the village street, naturally. But I do mean that these fathers and mothers, and in many cases aunts and grandparents into the bargain, not only rush about visiting the children but suggest having them all home for Christmas as well."

"How very unsettling that must be for everyone!"

"That, dear, if I may say so as kindly as possible, is quite the only sensible word you've uttered yet. Take little Sidney, for instance. Little Sidney has practically driven me out of my mind, as you can see for yourself. I was compelled to ask the Vicar to have a talk with him. And the Vicar said, 'The child is simply bewildered by his new surroundings. Give him time, and he'll settle down.' 'Very well, Vicar,' I said, 'if the boy *wants* time, let him *have* time.' And the result was that little Sidney is now a totally different child and makes his bed and plays hopscotch and does what he's told—besides putting on weight. But if little Sidney, to say nothing of the others, is dragged by the roots of his hair all the way up to London by his mother and grandfather, it's going to unsettle him again completely."

"Yes, I quite see that it would."

"Whereas—as I was saying, dear, when you interrupted me—whereas, if he stays where he is, he can join in all the Christmas parties in the village and not be unsettled at all."

"Then, Miss Little-mug, perhaps we might discuss the arrangements for the party. Everyone is only too anxious to help. And of course the parents——"

"Dear, no one can feel sorrier for the parents than I do. But the fonder they are of their children—and I'm bound

to say that little Sidney, especially since his talk with the Vicar, is in many ways a very dear child—the fonder they are of them, the less they ought to wish to drive them from pillar to post in crowded trains and cold weather, merely in order to expose them to the risk of being blown sky-high by bombs in the middle of the night."

"If you put it like that, Miss Little-mug, one can't help feeling that it does seem unreasonable."

"It is unreasonable, dear. Let alone the disappointment to those who are planning Christmas treats for the children. And that is why you see me as you do, dear—calm, I hope, but thoroughly distressed. I can scarcely remember when I've been so near allowing myself to become agitated."

"I think I can, Miss Little-mug. It was when you first heard that little Sidney and the others were to be billeted on you. And I do feel it's rather hard, if just as you've all settled down so happily, the children are to be moved again."

(What one really said, however, was just: "I'm so dreadfully sorry, Miss Little-mug, but I think the meerscham pipe must have been cracked before." And all Miss Little-mug answered was: "Very well, dear, then little Sidney can have it to blow bubbles with in his Christmas stocking.") E. M. D.



"Please could you make my face a little more military-looking?"



PRUSSIANISED HISTORY OF ENGLAND

SEQUEL TO A WELL-KNOWN STORY ABOUT KING ALFRED

George Morrow, December 8th, 1915

simplicity, have been understandingly edited by Miss LILIAS RIDER HAGGARD and sympathetically illustrated by Mr. EDWARD SEAGO under the title of *The Rabbit Skin Cap* (COLLINS, 15/-). The Norfolk of the eighteen-sixties had probably changed less in some respects since QUEEN ELIZABETH's day than it has done during the last half-century. Old customs, old beliefs, old ways of speech, old abuses still flourished; a man might still sell his wife in open market for sixpence. The past fifty years have seen the passing of much that was hard and sordid in rural conditions of life. Children no longer go to work at eight years old on a diet of "salt sop" and boiled swede. But with these things has vanished too much that was good. Most of the ancient country crafts referred to in this book have been lost wholly or in part by the coming of the factory era—the making of such things as eel-traps, frail baskets, hurdles and hay-rakes. Who nowadays can hope to see ten harvesters going to work with their scythes on their shoulders? Nor has the general process of standardisation

left untouched the type of sturdy countryman to which *George Baldry* pre-eminently belongs—a type, possibly, evolved by the survival of the fittest in a life which was one long struggle for bare subsistence.

Transmigration

There are many differing opinions as to the theory, with its numerous variations, that the soul of our grandam may haply inhabit a bird. Mr. RONALD FRASER takes the line that everyone has been a series of other somebodies in the past and will be a further series in the future, though few of them may be aware of it. The heroine of his novel, *Miss Lucifer* (CAPE, 7/6), is one of those who are aware of it. In her sleep she can renew her former haunts and in the present she is able to use experience gained long ago. She herself confesses that she is "a peculiar woman, not easy to live with." Whether she is probable or even possible depends on how far you can go in your acceptance of the views which

she embodies, for in the absence of clear evidence there can be no rules by which she can be tested. That may suggest that such a person might be fairly easily invented, but it is certainly not everybody's job to invent one so logically complex as Mr. FRASER's lady. To be frank his story of her is at times a bit hard to follow, but it is well worth an effort.

Treasure-Trove from the Essex Marshes

With the main stream of English life too congested for comfort, it is reassuring to come across a backwater whose charm, peace and other-worldliness hold memories of more leisurely days. Mr. S. L. BENSUSAN's *East Anglia*, however, is anything but a sleepy hollow. It is tingling with life and energy and its natives are "characters" all. Here is *Lady Dyther*, whose husband's business attitude towards the war now known to our neighbours as *l'autre* has set her on the social apex. Here is *Boy Bird*, most admirable of her garden lads, save for his egalitarian tendencies. Here are *Mother Wospottle*, whose homely spells are out-rivalled by those of a passing ventriloquist; and *Brother Guffin*, whose proposal to *Miss Pewter* is the completest comedy of the lot. But not all these three dozen tales are comedies. Tragedy overtakes *Job Perry*, who coveted his sister's savings; and there is a profounder turn to the fortunes of *Martin Bastable*, who sought and found his soul among the Peculiar People. With a dialect so deftly handled as to grace without hampering their appeal, *Tales from the Saxon Shore* (ROUTLEDGE, 10/6), read aloud or to yourself, begged, borrowed or bestowed, is a book in a thousand.

Hard Cases

In *Printer's Error* (MICHAEL JOSEPH, 7/6) Miss GLADYS MITCHELL's elderly investigator, *Mrs. Bradley*, is employed in unravelling a skein that is elaborately entangled and in dealing with people whose activities, for one reason and another, required drastic curtailment. The way by which this vigorous old lady achieved success requires to be most carefully studied if it is to receive due appreciation, but apart from an irritating habit of addressing young men as "child" she maintains, though she does not enhance, the reputation she gained in *St. Peter's Finger*. Miss MITCHELL's characterisation deserves honourable mention, but she must

guard against a tendency to make the plots of her stories too baffling and intricate.

A Muscular Christian

Mr. CHARLES ALDEN SELTZER has written some thirty novels, and to mention such titles as *Last Hope Ranch*, *The Red Brand* and *Clear the Trail* is to give a fair indication of his line of country. He has not strayed far afield in *Arizona Jim* (HODDER AND STOUGHTON, 7/6); the story of the struggle between a notorious cattle-thief and a man known throughout the district as *Reverend Jim* runs a steady course on conventional lines, and will give pleasure to all who are not too sophisticated to appreciate it. Moreover, Mr. SELTZER sees to it that his scenes of violence are tempered by the part that true love plays in the lives of *Jim* and his sister.

"Orando Laborando"

Mr. C. R. EVERS says that he was reluctant to undertake the task of writing *Rugby* (5/-), but he can rest assured that his little book is a most welcome addition to Messrs. BLACKIE's series of English Public Schools. Happy in having ample material at his command, Mr. EVERS has maintained a nice sense of proportion, and he has seen to it that the early history has not crowded the record of recent events from the picture. Thus he has given a clear and comprehensive account of the origin, growth and modern developments of this great school. *Rugby* has, in spite of one or two setbacks, been especially fortunate in numbering distinguished men among its headmasters, and Mr. EVERS is at his best in discussing their merits and, in some cases, their limitations. The illustrations are excellently reproduced.



"Have you any novels in luminous print?"

Mr. Punch on Tour

At Port Sunlight, Cheshire, from December 16th to January 13th, 1940, the Exhibition of the Original Work of Modern *Punch* Artists will be on view at the Lady Lever Art Gallery.

Invitations to visit the Exhibition will be gladly sent to readers if they apply to the Secretary, *Punch* Offices, 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4.

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